

REMARKS

The Official Action mailed May 23, 2011, has been received and its contents carefully noted. This response is filed within three months of the mailing date of the Official Action and therefore is believed to be timely without extension of time. Accordingly, the Applicant respectfully submits that this response is being timely filed.

The Applicant notes with appreciation the consideration of the Information Disclosure Statements filed on May 12, 2006; July 1, 2009 and February 2, 2010.

A further Information Disclosure Statement is submitted herewith and consideration of this Information Disclosure Statement is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-22 were pending in the present application prior to the above amendment. Claims 10 and 21 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer and claims 1-3, 9 and 11-16 have been amended to better recite the features of the present invention. Accordingly, claims 1-9, 11-20 and 22 are now pending in the present application, of which claims 1-3, 9 and 11 are independent. For the reasons set forth in detail below, all claims are believed to be in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration is requested.

Paragraphs 2-5 of the Official Action rejects claims 1-22 as obvious based on the combination of U.S. Patent No. 6,246,524 to Tanaka '524, U.S. Patent No. 6,291,320 to Yamazaki, JP 2003-287704 to Okamoto, U.S. Patent No. 7,753,548 to Ogawa, U.S. Publication No. 2003/0063630 to Sakai, U.S. Patent No. 7,723,642 to Gu and U.S. Patent No. 6,545,248 to Tanaka '248. The Applicant respectfully submits that a *prima facie* case of obviousness cannot be maintained against the independent claims of the present application, as amended.

As stated in MPEP §§ 2142-2144.04, to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some reason, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art reference (or

references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. Obviousness can only be established by combining or modifying the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention where there is some reason to do so found either explicitly or implicitly in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art. "The test for an implicit showing is what the combined teachings, knowledge of one of ordinary skill in the art, and the nature of the problem to be solved as a whole would have suggested to those of ordinary skill in the art." In re Kotzab, 217 F.3d 1365, 1370, 55 USPQ2d 1313, 1317 (Fed. Cir. 2000). See also In re Fine, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 USPQ2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988); In re Jones, 958 F.2d 347, 21 USPQ2d 1941 (Fed. Cir. 1992).

The prior art, either alone or in combination, does not teach or suggest all the features of the independent claims, as amended. Independent claims 1 and 3 have been amended to recite changing the second laser beam into a third laser beam by *using a slit to block an end portion of the second laser beam in a major-axis direction of the laser beam*. Similarly, independent claims 9 and 11 have been amended to recite *a slit for blocking an end portion of the laser beam* in a major-axis direction of the laser beam whose intensity distribution has been homogenized by the beam homogenizer. Furthermore, independent claim 2 has been amended to recite moving the second laser beam relative to the irradiation surface so that the second laser beam is irradiated to a first irradiation region; and moving the second laser beam relative to the irradiation surface so that the second laser beam is irradiated to a second irradiation region, wherein the first irradiation region and the second irradiation region overlap with each other in an overlapping portion, and *wherein the overlapping portion is a microcrystal region*. It is respectfully submitted that Tanaka '524, Yamazaki, Okamoto, Ogawa, Sakai, Gu and Tanaka '248, either alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest the above-referenced features of the present invention.

Since Tanaka '524, Yamazaki, Okamoto, Ogawa, Sakai, Gu and Tanaka '248 do not teach or suggest all the claim limitations, a *prima facie* case of obviousness cannot be maintained. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) are in order and respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable to place this application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16, 1.17, 1.20(a), 1.20(b), 1.20(c), and 1.20(d) (except the Issue Fee) which may be required now or hereafter, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-2280.

Respectfully submitted,



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